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The Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area in Marche Region. An integrated territorial project that includes inland areas and cities in a metropolitan context to relaunch local competitive systems

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Abstract

i) Context and purpose of the research.

This paper describes a part of the applied research carried out by the Urban Planning Area of SIMAU Department of Marche Polytechnic University in Ancona Municipality.

ii) The scope of this paper is to demonstrate the short-sightedness of the decision, at a national level, of identifying 15 Metropolitan Areas according to dimensional rather than function and relational parameters, that trigger integrated metropolitan development.

iii) methodology: this paper starts from the Marche region experience, which is one of the regions not included in the 15 regions with urban areas classified as metropolitan areas pursuant to Regional Law no. 56/2014 (because it does not have cities with more than 250,000 inhabitants in the territory), to request that the criteria used to identify metropolitan areas in Italy be revised. The Region has started the creation of the territorial partnership called the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area (Area Metropolitana Medio-Adriatica – AMMA). This experience of a new method for the management of the territory was implemented by the Research project, by identifying functional connective systems that confirm its unitary structure and the current and future potential, for the widespread systematic development of the Metropolitan Area as a whole.

iv) Principal results and major conclusions.

This experience, is today in Italy, an extraordinary case study generated from of local participatory development (Community-

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Led Local Development – CLLD); a integrated, bottom-up process with the involvement of local communities. The results of the applied research, conducted in the Middle-Adriatic Territory, made it possible to identify critical and original aspects in the organisation of the “variable geometry” system of relationships between Municipalities, in terms of participation in complex projects and the introduction of specific Territorial Protocols of Understanding, to Identify *de facto* cities with respect to the *de jure* and developmental cities of the FUAs in Marche region. The entire Area Vasta (Associated Local Health Districts) indeed behaves, like a large city, with a unique urban structure and strong functional interconnected relationships.

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1. Introduction

This paper describes a part of the applied research carried out by the Urban Planning Area of SIMAU Department of Marche Polytechnic University in Ancona Municipality, funded by the MIT Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport, from 2012 to 2014.

The recent introduction of Law no. 56/2014 in Italy has made it possible to overcome the obstacles behind twenty years of unsuccessful attempts to create metropolitan areas, and today opens a period of potential innovation (Bianchetti, 2013, Indovina, 2007). Although Marche Region is not one of the fifteen regions with the “metropolitan” cities constituted by the Italian law (because it does not meet the requirement of having at least one urban nucleus with more than 250,000 inhabitants), in response to the process for the implementation of the reform by local Italian authorities, it started a territorial cooperation which has led to the creation of the territorial partnership called the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area (Area Metropolitana Medio-Adriatica – AMMA).

The more general scope of this paper is to redefine the formation process of the metropolitan areas in Italy and indicate the limitations of the national reform, which led to the identification of 15 metropolitan areas based on dimensional parameters rather than functional and relational parameters, that trigger integrated metropolitan development. For this purpose, the main characteristics of the Middle-Adriatic Territory are firstly described, according to which a typical formation process was developed (Community-Led Local Development – CLLD); a integrated, bottom-up process with the involvement of local communities.

The current discrepancy between the functional and political-administrative organization of the territory has been generated by a lock-in in the evolution of the institutions on which the policy-making process at a local level is based. If a clear distinction had been drawn between the formation of *cities de facto* and the formation of metropolitan areas, it would have become evident that a further critical distinction was necessary between, on the one hand, expanding the administrative boundaries of *cities de jure* to make them overlap with cities *de facto* and, on the other hand, designing appropriate governance schemes for the corresponding metropolitan areas (Calafati & Veneri, 2013).

2. Towards the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area: the strategy of integrated urban development

Between 2013 and 2014 the reform involved the entire system of local Italian authorities, and with the introduction of Law 56/2014 started to produce, in 2015, its first concrete effects on the national territory.

The “Metropolitan cities” constituted by the “Delrio reform” are considered to be the most important tool to relaunch the economic competitiveness of the Country (Oliva, 2013), i.e. as local systems with direct access to European funding and the ability to attract private Italian and foreign investments.

The current strategic placement of the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area, which originated from a *bottom-up* process of inter-municipal cooperation, is the result of the national programming policy introduced in 2003 by the MIT, which made it possible to identify strategic territorial platforms and promote an innovative package of “Ancona Ports and Stations” projects, plans/pilot programmes, at national level, such as:

- Jesi SISTeMA, Pivot corridors 1 and 2, Instrument supports;
- Fabriano, Strategic Plans and Urban Plans of Mobility.

In particular, in Marche region, as from 2006 the MIT promoted a number of programmes/projects in the territory in order to identify the Jesi Corridor as the Marche region portion of the National Strategic Territorial Ancona-Civitavecchia Tyrrhenian-Adriatic Platform.

The scope of the work carried out by the Urban Planning Area of the SIMAU together with Ancona Municipality was to create the “Preliminary Document for the Definition of Scenarios and the Territorial Partnership”. The Document is subdivided into Theme Systems and contains studies to support the Territorial Development Plan of the Ancona Area Vasta, today called the “*Middle-Adriatic Metropolitan Area (Amma), Integrated Territorial Project*”.

The Preliminary Document was developed in 6 Thematic Systems:

1. settlement system – characteristics and demographic dynamics; 2. ecological environmental system; 3. infrastructural system; 4. production system; 5. energy system; 6. cultural and tourist system.

This document is the reference framework for the creation of the Integrated Territorial Project pursued by establishing a specific territorial Partnership (signed by the subscribing public administrations in May 2014).

3. Settlement characteristics of the emergent Marche Region Metropolitan Area: early characterizations

The Marche Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area, originally classified as a pivot-territory, is a polycentric developing entity of the Strategic Platform that “places at the service” of the transnational area of the Ionian-Adriatic Macroregion its propensity for interchanges and the relationship between networks and flows of different kinds (goods, people, knowledge, information, economies and markets). A cultural, historical-identity heritage, that has been established in time and is strongly rooted in the morphological system, that has influenced (and also characterized) the development of settlements. This development occurred firstly in isolated nuclei and then gradually, after 50 years, thanks to dissemination phenomena of the urbanised fabric, with the connection of urban and peri-urban fringe areas. This phenomenon, which was included in many municipal (PRG) and supra-local (PPAR, PTC) planning and programming processes, today shows an “urban territory” that is closely-knit, cohesive, and increasingly synergistic in addressing territorial policies and shared programming (Bronzini *et al.*, 1997; Bronzini & Marinelli, 2010; Bronzini & Bedini, 2012). «*Within this coarse-grained framework, closer attention is increasingly focused on the territories of living and the structuring of urban polycentrism into “micro-cities”*» (Gasparrini, 2010). Research carried out in the preliminary stage of the project made it possible to outline the fundamental characteristics of the Area Vasta system, characterized by widely spread low density settlements, (with more than 400,000 inhabitants in a urban area of approximately 12,506 ha over a territory of 121,869 ha) (Minetti, Bucci, & Zenobi 2011; 2012). The territorial system characterized by strong relationships of functionality, reciprocal service integration, local travelling, and public and private mobility for study, work, culture and leisure: a single urban structure, the largest of the Marche system, in terms of spatial dimension and density of relationships. The reference model proposed goes beyond the concept of functional areas shared at regional level (*Planet cense survey*) (Calafati, 2006), and recognizes a relational system of cohesive hierarchical and inclusive functioning around urban polarities. In this logic, the *polarized model* of the dynamics of the single *pivot* municipality (centroid) (Karlsson & Olsson, 2006), with respect to the smaller urban poles for which it is a reference (Ancona-Jesi and Senigallia in the regional model, PlaNet CenSE¹) is part of a larger system of continuity between territories (intrinsically linked) and direct relationships between the first level municipal areas, creating a system settlement very similar to the definition of “Morphological Urban Area” MUA² given by the European Community (European Commission, 2011). The methodology used to identify the perimeter of the Area Vasta takes into account many different factors; from a regulatory point of view the reference model is provided by the Functional Urban Areas known as the FUAs, that are defined according to the local labour system (LLS) and mobility models, and identified by areas consisting of a larger urban centre and neighbouring centres, that are economically and socially related. In order to define the scope of the Area Vasta however, the FUAs model was in part superseded by integration with territorial aggregation models related to the provisions of services: water, energy and waste collection consortia, health care

¹ PlaNet CenSE, Urban Policentrism and economic development in Marche Region, Marche Region 2006 – Urban Redevelopment and economic development in Marche Region, Marche Region.

² The Morphological Urban Area, even in the case of a smaller territory is, by assonance, very close to the concept of the metropolitan area.

and public transport systems. Each of the following theme-based systems used to create the knowledge framework determines its own area of interpretation, giving the Area Vasta a structure characterised by a “variable geometry”.

4. The Characterising different settlement models to create specific innovative policies: a case study

The Development Plan of the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area has made it possible to define development processes and scenarios for strategic projects that promote integrated urban policies and to strengthen the role of cities within the framework of the European Cohesion Policy. In this context, this research represents an interesting opportunity to reflect on the specificity and role of the territory-cities of Central Italy and their potential in the framework of national policies (Bagnasco, 1977; Camagni, Gibelli, & Rigamonti, 2002). This widespread polycentric system may overcome the juxtaposition between “inland areas” and “metropolitan cities”, focusing on an integrated territorial project whose scope is to ensure that it is recognised as a cohesive and competitive “intermediate urban system” in Italy and Europe.

4.1. The definition of Territorial Structure³ and Territorial Figures in preliminary studies for the Area Vasta. Beyond the concept of “Territorial coalescence”²

The polycentric structure of the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area is a single urban structure, based on a complex multifunctional territorial frame and specific dissemination of relationships, referable to a polarised polycentric model (Calafati, 2006). Numerous places of education and training revolve around the main networks, organizing themselves in more or less closely-packed masses close to the pivot systems, thus strengthening polarised polycentric functionality according to the Principle of “territorial coalescence” (Eurocities, 2011; 2013). The local identities of the landscapes and different functional hierarchical relationships of the territory outline recognizable territorial physiognomies, which connect and go beyond the existing municipal boundaries. The great variety of relationships that make up the territorial structure are summarised into four specific “territorial figures” of the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area, which are:

- the diversified city of coast;
- the valley and hills of the Jesi area;
- the multipolar settlement of Aspio and Musone;
- the urban countryside of the mid-hillside territory.

The four territorial figures are characterized by specific intersectoral dynamics and express diversified development opportunities within the framework of the integrated territorial project (Camicia & Sartore, 2010).

The characterization of the specificities of the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area is further enriched by another essential aspect consisting of the pattern of the widespread city of low anthropization territories “*the urban countryside of the hilly territory*”. In this territory of the “Slow City” (Lanzani, 2011), the phenomena of “micro social cohesion”, the production of quality and the opportunities offered by the widespread presence of cultural containers and possible development programs related to the themes of the *Advanced Cultural District of Marche Region*⁴ (Florida, 2008) are particularly important. Four recognition contexts correspond to the different *territorial physiognomies* (Fantin *et al.*, 2012) that may be recognised in the Area Vasta. Scenarios, development processes and intervention guidelines are polarised around these to capture the funding resources for the integrated actions of the development strategy of Europe 2020. The relationship between urban and rural areas should be based on a number of voluntary cooperation and coordination agreements, with equal dignity for the participants and the awareness that

³ The identification of the territorial structure was developed by the Technical Group of the Department for the Territory and Environment of Ancona Municipality.

⁴ The Marche Region Advanced Cultural District, is a strategic action of regional programming promoted in compliance with the European Union directives set forth by the Green Paper *The cultural and creative industries, a potential to exploit* (2010). The development of the Marche Advanced Cultural District is based on the assumption that culture-based innovation which generates cultural and creative entrepreneurship may be a very strong competitive advantage even in traditional production industries of the territory. The processes and procedures of the Advanced Cultural District are identified with DGR 1753/2012 that defines the procedures and criteria to identify a “regional project park”, consisting of regional projects and no more than three supra-local, inter-provincial or interregional projects for each provincial context.

each area is reciprocally responsible for the development of the other (Hall, 2009). A perspective of territorial development limited to the polycentric development of individual metropolitan regions is not in line with the objective of maintaining the presence of a variety of urban and rural areas. For this reason, the goal is to attain a polycentric organization throughout the entire territory of the Union, defining a progressive urban hierarchy (Hall, 2009).

5. The Conclusions, opportunities and critical factors of the current process

The results of the applied research, conducted in the Middle-Adriatic Territory, showed:

1. *the critical and analytical weaknesses that characterise the process of formation of the Italian metropolitan areas.* Marche Region has areas with high levels of anthropization that are “not only urban areas”, but *de facto* Cities (Calafati, 2014), in which the most important socio-economic dynamics are concentrated, although not only in a positive sense: this is where greater economic, social and environmental, problems are, for example, experienced (Barbieri & Giaimo, 2014);

2. *factors of originality in the organization of the system of relations, with gravitational areas that do not always coincide, between the municipalities in terms of participation in complex projects and the introduction of specific territorial Protocols of Understanding.* The experience acquired in 2012, when the preliminary studies carried out by the Urban Planning Department of Marche Polytechnic University to support Ancona Municipality were started, today represents an extraordinary experience of local participatory development in Italy (Community-Led Local Development – CLLD); this is an integrated, *bottom-up* process with the involvement of the local communities. In creating a bottom-up metropolitan-scale process for the mid-Adriatic territory (AMMA), a park of metropolitan-scale “multi-scalar projects” complying with the aims of the new programming framework of the 2014-2020 EU funds, is currently being monitored. Recognising the planning potential gives us the image of a territory rich in proposals from which many development processes may be created, overcoming the *impasse* of the failure to institutionalise at a national level. Ten Metropolitan projects have to date been identified, around which many of the interventions presented by the Municipalities may focus. In this context, it is evident that the Municipalities of the Area Vasta need to propose without delay to the Italian Government a form of local participatory development, through an integrated territorial and multisectoral strategy. This strategy is supported by a sound governance⁵ proposal, not only in order to qualify, *in itinere*, as one of the 15 metropolitan areas institutionalised at national level, but also to demonstrate that it is a “competitive urban territory” in the competition for the allocation of Community funds correlated and supplementary to those of the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) dedicated to the city axis, and other national and European funding opportunities (Casavola & Trigilia, 2012);

3. *factors of innovation to identify the de facto cities with respect to the de jure and developmental cities of the FUAs in Marche in order to raise the levels of widespread polycentric competitiveness of the territory.* The Area Vasta system (Association of Local Health Districts), which is characterized by widely spread low density settlements, does however have strong relationships of functionality, reciprocal service integration, local travelling, and public and private mobility for study, work, culture and leisure: a single urban structure, the largest of the Marche system, in terms of spatial dimension and density of relationships. Complementarity based not only on economic cooperation, but also on all the other urban functions: culture, education, knowledge and social infrastructure (Papa, Gargiulo, Franco & Russo, 2014). In Marche Region, adjacent municipalities, indeed, lead to the formation of “new cities”. These forms of cooperation make it possible to overcome the current administrative boundaries and maintain, in less densely populated and weaker areas, economic activities and services, that may otherwise be sustained by individual towns.

Table 1. Indicators of the polycentric unitary system of the Middle-Adriatic Metropolitan Area, Preliminary, studies 2012-2014.

⁵ The first step to constructing the *governance* to support the territorial offer of the Area Vasta will be signing a Vasta Area Memorandum of Understanding (PRAV) pursuant to which the local administrations (Municipalities, Entities, Trade associations) undertake to share the development process and scenarios outlined by the Vasta Area Plan Process, and contribute to implementing the Europe 2020 strategy and its 11 theme aims.

- Surface Area of the Territory	1,232 sq km	- inhabitants	414758 (ISTAT data)
- density	340 inhabitants/sq.km	- Urbanised area	125 sq.km
- municipal administrations	40	- Urbanisation Surfaces Area General Zoning Plan	165 sq.km
Settlement system: <i>The Area Vasta is the most important Marche region urban structure in terms of relational dimensions, size and density and may be considered to all extents and purposes as a Metropolitan Area</i>	a_ 132 sq km Surf. Area Territorial / b_ Features characterized by morphology c_ Historicised settlement distribution d_ Administrative fragmentation (40 municipalities) / f_ Territorial coalescence process e_ Polarisation over 5 systems (Ancona, Falconara, Jesi, Osimo, Senigallia)		
Environmental system <i>Consisting of a more or less solid and almost continuous grid of "existing and/or potential "biodiverse nature reserves", it acts as an ecologic structure of a "widespread city" with metropolitan characteristics</i>	a_ 60 km of coastline / 6 protected flora areas LR 72/1974 b_ 2 nodes of the REM Network: - Conero Nature Park (59.83 sq.km) - Ripa Bianca (3.11 sq.km) c_ 2 ZPS Nature Network 2000: Ripa Bianca (1.40 sq.km) - Monte Conero (17.68 sq.km) d_ 5 SIC Nature Network 2000: Coast between Ancona (1.68 sq.km), Portonovo (1.32 sq.km), Monte Conero (11.41 sq.km), Castelfidardo (0.55 sq.km), Fiumesino, Ripabianca (1.40 sq.km)		
Infrastructure system. <i>Thanks to the fact that a complex framework of networks and 3 multi-vectorial grid plates (port-airport and freight terminal) are located in the Area Vasta, Ancona province as a whole is recognised as a high infrastructure area (11th in the national classification based on the infrastructure index)</i>	a_ Hub territory of the Tyrrhenian-Adriatic PTS b_ "Core" port TEN-T; (142,000 TEU, 1 Mln pax, 213,000 vehicles in transit) c_ Corridor Terminal TEN-T Helsinki-Valletta and Baltic-Adriatic d_ 1 Freight Terminal, connected directly to the railway line e_ 1 National airport (12th Italian CARGO airport_ 6000 ton cargo)		
Production system. <i>There is a high percentage of larger regional manufacturing companies in the Area Vasta, and the main competitive aspect of the system is the multi-sectorial nature of the different fields of production</i>	a_ 40 thousand enterprises in 2012 b_ approximately 3,700 manufacturers (17.6% of the manufacturing companies of the region) c_ 90 of the most important manufacturing companies of Marche Region (35.7%) d_ Strong characterisation in the high tech industry for SMEs e_ Localisation of international brands and large regional sales structures		
Cultural system: <i>The representation of the cultural and touri system shows a territory characterised by dense and widespread cultural heritage and landscapes which are firm incorporated in the structure of the environmental system helping to provide settlement values and meanings.</i>	a_ 5,000 architectural heritage, (1,145 religious, 3,000 residential buildings, 19 historic gardens) b_ Widespread museum system (49 museums/museum collections) c_ 85 libraries. (inc.30 SBN centres) d_ 26 theatres. d_ (inc.13 historic theatres) and _47 High Schools f_ Polytechnic University, (Agriculture, Economics, Engineering, Medicine, Mathematics, Physics) g_ Toursit promotion networks, (16 oil cities, 11 wine cities, 1 honey town)		
energy system	a_ Increase in consumption 1996/2007: +65%; b_ 5 "extended" consumer areas, c_ 4 thermal power centres (API Energia, Jesi Energia Consortium, Turbogas Enel, ASTEA) d_ Renewable systems (hydroelectric on the River Esino/ Photovoltaic plants/Biogas landfills)		

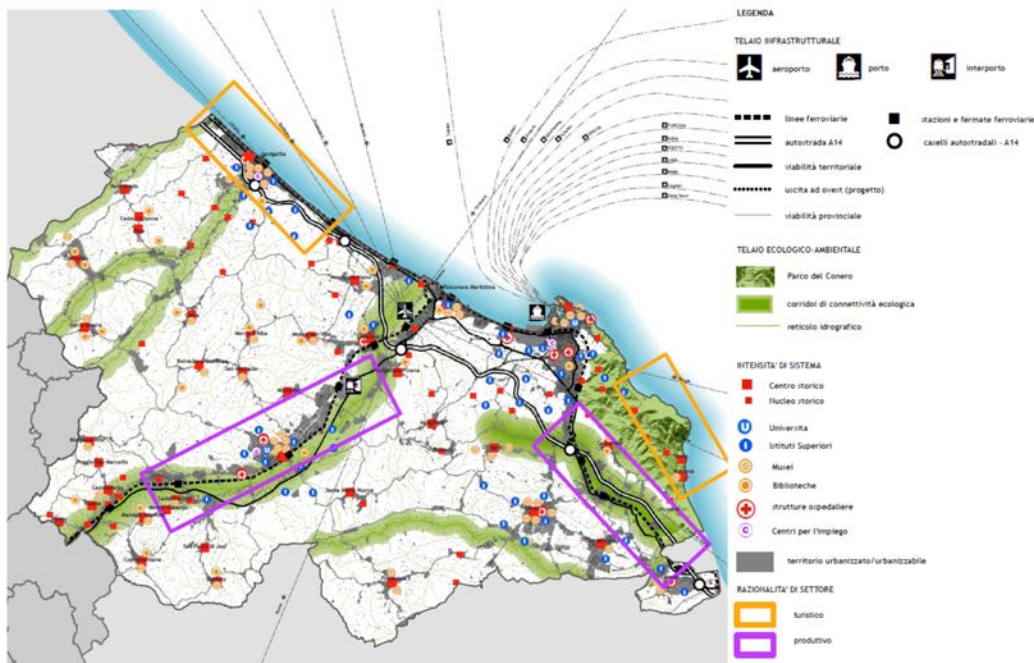


Fig. 1. "Territorial Structure" in preliminary studies for the Area Vasta. The territorial system characterized by strong relationships of functionality, reciprocal service integration, local travelling, and public and private mobility for study, work, culture and leisure: a single urban structure, the largest of the Marche system, in terms of spatial dimension and density of relationships.

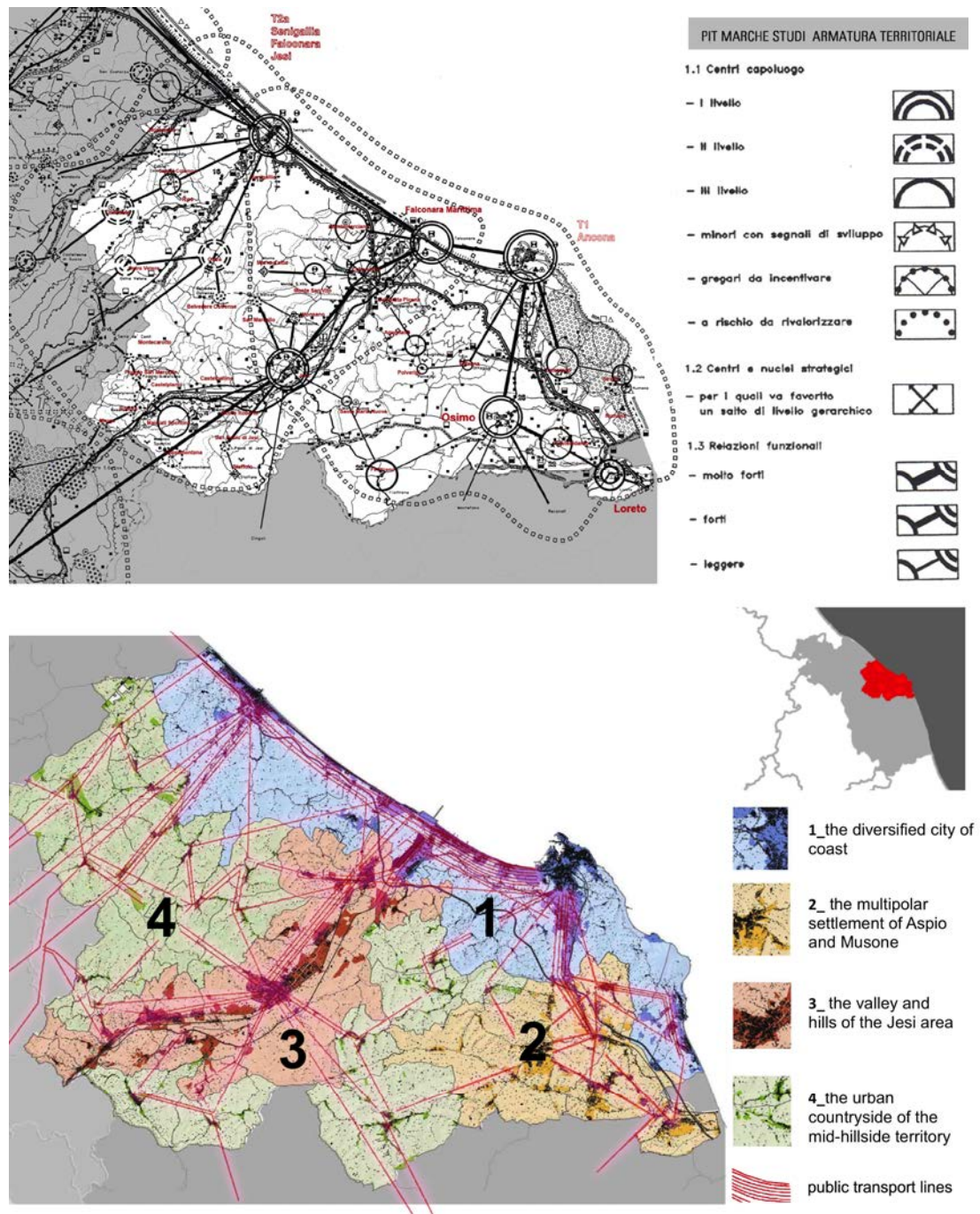


Fig. 2. First picture: the “polarized model” of the dynamics of the single pivot municipality. The model proposed goes beyond the concept of functional areas shared at regional level and recognizes a relational system of cohesive hierarchical and inclusive functioning around urban polarities; Second picture: the territorial figures: four possible keys of interpretation of the Area Vasta beyond the concept of “Territorial coalescence”. The local identities of the landscapes and different functional hierarchical relationships of the territory outline recognizable territorial physiognomies, which connect and go beyond the existing municipal boundaries. The great variety of relationships that make up the territorial structure are summarised into four specific “territorial figures” of the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area.

The main actions to increase this potential are the following:

- control the physical expansion of towns and cities;
- maintain a balanced variety of functions and social groups;
- optimize the use of resources, above all power, matter (waste) and water;
- improve access through eco-efficient transport;
- maintain and develop the natural and cultural heritage.

Local authorities should also pursue the objective of the "compact city" intended as a city with reduced distances, that makes it possible to cut down on the transfers required to meet production, exchange and daily consumption needs (Musterd & Murie, 2011). The current process to create the Metropolitan area in Marche Region, as a Community-Led Local Development experience, shows, contrary to the national experience, that the crucial step to resolve the "metropolitan question" is necessarily the transformation of the *de facto* city into a *de jure* city (Calafati, 2009; 2013). Through the institution of "incorporation": the boundaries of large Italian cities should be expanded to incorporate the neighbouring settlement systems which even in the case of the Ancona Area Vasta, are gradually becoming districts (Calafati & Veneri, 2013). From this perspective, the institutional solution requires a profound change in the reference paradigm that may be summarized with the introduction of "supplementary institutions" rather than "aggregational institutions" (March & Olsen, 1992). «It would make sense to create the metropolis before trying to institutionalize the metropolitan areas» (Calafati, 2014).

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